



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

100 USDA, Suite 206
Stillwater, OK 74074
Voice: 405.742.1204
Web: www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov

News Release

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Contact:

Robert Hathorne, Public Affairs Specialist
405-338-5207, robert.hathorne@ok.usda.gov

Changes Coming to USDA's Largest Conservation Program, CSP *2017 Rollout of CSP Offers Conservation Opportunities to more Producers*

STILLWATER, Okla., Sept. 19, 2016—The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces changes are on the horizon for the nation's biggest conservation program, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

“With a lot of review and input from producers, partners and other stakeholders, we are making important changes to CSP,” says NRCS Chief Jason Weller. “We want to make sure there is every opportunity for America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to take their conservation efforts to the next level.”

Since 2010, farmers and ranchers have enrolled 70 million acres in CSP, of which 4.7 million acres have been enrolled in Oklahoma.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, rotational grazing, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat—all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land.

The most popular CSP conservation enhancements among Oklahoma producers include upgraded chemical spray nozzles and GPS targeting systems to improve air quality, improved grazing management practices to promote plant health and enhanced fertilizing and grazing systems to improve water quality.

Changes that producers can expect to see when the program is offered in Fiscal Year 2017 include greater flexibility at the local level to prioritize resource concerns and conservation approaches, more enhancements and almost double the conservation practices offered, and better reporting tools to tell producers the results of their conservation efforts on their land.

“This expanded conservation activity list that offers Oklahoma farmers and ranchers more options to address natural resource challenges,” said Oklahoma State Conservationist Gary O’Neal. “New conservation activities include new options for nutrient management, several new soil health options, and enhancements to improve stream health as well as activities that benefit wildlife and pollinator habitat.”

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CSP is for producers who are already established conservation stewards, helping them to deliver multiple conservation benefits on working lands, including improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat.

The program will be offered in FY17 (Oct. 1-Sept. 30, 2017). Producers interested in the program can find more at www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp or visit their local USDA Service Center.

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